

Leahy will also be missed, according to Lea, who penned a poem—"Her Eyes"—that he read at her recent retirement party.

Here is what Lea wrote:

HER EYES

—for Mary Leahy, on her retirement  
I asked your friends about your eyes—what color  
They were, in a few short words. The answers ranged  
From what I'd expect, like sparkling, penetrating,  
To ones that were anything but: the earliest green  
Of spring, said one, another brook trout green.  
And yet the words they used around the colors  
They'd chosen made a chorus: compassion, kindness,  
Acceptance, faithfulness, honor. What can I add?  
Only that in my knowing and loving you  
These years, I've beheld within those eyes a shine  
That none of us will ever quite describe:  
A certain mystery flicker born of watching  
Pain for years yourself, and from its kindling  
In them what we, in our own crude ways, name hope.

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about a bill I introduced yesterday, the Army Arsenal Strategic Workload Enhancement Act of 2012.

I am grateful to be working with seven of my colleagues on this issue: Senator KIRK, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator HARKIN, Senator PRYOR, Senator BOOZMAN, Senator SCHUMER and Senator GILLIBRAND. Each of us understands the strategic contributions that arsenals make to our national defense. I am pleased that we have a bipartisan bill to put those capabilities on a firm footing for the future.

I know that the men and women at Rock Island Arsenal in my home State of Illinois deserve that firm footing. I was there just last month, seeing again for myself their good work to equip our troops.

The Joint Manufacturing and Technology Center, JMTC, employs some 1,700 highly skilled workers, at least half of whom are veterans. The JMTC is the heart of Rock Island's 8,600-person workforce, every one of them dedicated to providing our troops with what they need.

For more than 10 years now, they have made critical weapons, parts and materiel for our men and women on the front lines of Iraq and Afghanistan. Very often, they have produced items in a crisis, when no one else including the private sector could do it. And they have made it by the deadline and kept it affordable.

The arsenal has made things like armored HMMWV kits to protect against improvised explosive devices, IEDs, at a time in the war when, frankly, we were caught flat-footed by the threat. They have produced portable tool sheds so that vehicle maintenance can take place in theater instead of having to pull those vehicles off the

front lines. When the Army depleted its stock of a small but critical component for artillery repair, Rock Island stepped up to provide it on short notice.

These are the little-known, lifesaving contributions made by this arsenal.

So my colleagues and I have come together on a bipartisan basis to make sure this strategic asset has a strong future. Our bill would require the Army to create a strategic plan to ensure each arsenal receives the workload it needs to keep its workers' skills sharp. The Army does this type of systematic planning for some of its subdivisions, but not for arsenals. This bill addresses that.

Our bill also would ensure that these arsenals can compete for any military contract, defense-wide. Too often, arsenals are passed over in the contract process. But this bill will ensure these connections happen.

Rock Island's highly skilled workforce has a proven track record. It is in everyone's interest to strengthen this competition.

These two core provisions will help to ensure the long-term health of Rock Island Arsenal. They build upon a bipartisan effort last year by the Illinois and Iowa delegations to expand the arsenal's ability to enter into public-private partnerships. We have seen how these partnerships can drive innovation in new areas like titanium and metal alloys. And they cost the government nothing, all the while assisting in keeping the factory warm and these critical skills available when our country needs them when our troops need them.

I appreciated Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN working with us through the National Defense Authorization Act last year to ensure these provisions were included. I look forward to working with them this year as well.

Rock Island Arsenal is a little-known gem in our military with great importance for our country. I hope we may continue to support their critical role by advancing the ideas I have discussed today.

RECOGNIZING THE BUSH  
VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to the dedication and devotion shown by a group of men and women to their local community. The longstanding services of the Bush Volunteer Fire Department in Laurel County, KY, has been on the cutting edge of rural and volunteer fire departments in the State of Kentucky since the department's beginnings in 1975.

What is so inspiring about the individuals in the Bush VFD is that despite the obstacles placed before them, they have always persevered and prevailed. While the men and women of the department have experienced many successes and accomplishments, I think it is safe to say that these individuals

feel that their biggest achievement is the opportunity to serve and protect their fellow citizens in the face of danger.

The Bush Volunteer Fire Department was conceived of by a group of 13 local men who saw a flaw within their community. At the time, the Laurel County Fire Department presided over the Bush community, but the LCFD was over half-an-hour away. The 13 men in Bush decided that the LCFD was just too far away, and for the safety of their citizens, it was time to assemble a fire-fighting unit closer to home. The LCFD donated a 1947 K-model International fire truck, and just like that, the Bush Volunteer Fire Department was born.

Since the beginning of the department, the men and women at BVFD have sought to become the best that they could possibly be, by implementing new and innovative practices at each and every turn in the road. In less than a year since their start in 1975, the department had secured funds to develop a fire station to house its truck and equipment. Bush VFD was also the third rural volunteer department in the Commonwealth of Kentucky to receive a Class 7 rating from ISO.

In 2011, the department began a junior firefighter program to enlist the help of eager youth in the community in a safe and beneficial way. In 2011, BVFD also enlisted its first female member, Whitney Minton, who joined in alongside her father Rick. These changes, and others, have assisted the Bush Volunteer Fire Department in attaining much of the success it knows today.

I am encouraged by the passion for service of the men and women firefighters and EMTs of the Bush Volunteer Fire Department. Former Bush Chief Ernest Rudder has had the pleasure of following in his father's footsteps, Birchell L. Rudder, in working in the fire house. Ernest's son Marc joined the ranks once he had reached the proper age, and now his son Noah is anxious to be the fourth generation of Rudders to enter firefighting. The Bush Fire Department is truly a family affair for families like the Rudders.

I wonder if those 13 men who took it upon themselves in 1975 to enact change in their community ever thought their dream of a volunteer fire department would become such a huge success. Although this story is common in our country, let us not go without recognizing those who set themselves apart in pursuit of a better future, like those in the Bush community.

Mr. President, at this time I would like to ask my colleagues in the United States Senate to join me in paying tribute to the outstanding service of the many volunteers over the course of the lifetime of the Bush Volunteer Fire Department.